

**Erin Drouin Testimony
Eastern Connecticut State University**

**Connecticut General Assembly Appropriations
Committee Budget Hearing
Connecticut State Colleges and Universities
Wednesday, February 10, 2016**

Dear Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee,

As someone who is a mere twenty one years old, five years still feels like somewhat of a long period of time. I understand that many things can change in five years. You can go from a junior in high school to a senior in college. You can go from your father praying before every time he tries to teach you how to drive to being, if I do say so myself, an excellent driver. You can also bear witness, to the fact that over the course of the last five years, state support of the Connecticut State Universities has gone from covering 44 percent of all total costs to covering 31 percent of total costs. Within the last five years, tuition has increased 21 percent. Within last five years, I've gone from having completely and totally free education to having to pay for the entirety of my education.

What matters is this: my name is Erin Drouin and I'm a student at Eastern Connecticut State University. I can also barely afford it. I pay for my school without financial assistance from my parents through a University Honors Scholarship, student loans, and a part time job. This is the only way I can afford to go to my wonderful school. And my school *is* wonderful, and it needs funding from the state to keep it that way. Eastern has provided an environment that has allowed me to thrive as a student, a scholar, an individual, and a Connecticut citizen. I'm a

political science major who is triple minoring in women's studies, communications, and writing. As an undergraduate, I've immersed myself in multiple independent research projects, including an Honors Thesis that I will complete as a member of the University Honors Program. I've been fortunate enough to interact on daily basis with multiple faculty who have provided me with knowledge, support, and challenge. I'm also heavily involved on campus. I'm the Secretary of our Student Government Association, the President of the Honors Club, a Peer Diversity Educator, and a University Writing Tutor. My freshman year at Eastern, I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, an chronic illness that I thought would be detrimental to my schoolwork, but is not, thanks to Eastern's free accommodations offered by the Office of Accessibility. In a multitude of ways, I'm very fortunate to have been provided with an immaculate experience that, had Eastern not been the affordable option, I would have been denied.

I'm sorry to have made this all about me, but I'm an incredible student, a Connecticut student. And I'm what you're investing in by allocating more money to state schools. It would be devastating to think that someone like me, who just wants the opportunity to thrive, would be denied some of my experiences due to a lack of funding or resources. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Erin Drouin